

objection and rejection is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the remarks herein.

Summary of the Office Action

The Abstract is objected to because it is too long. Claims 1-19 are pending. Claims 1-7 and 11-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by “The Six Levels of a Happy Marriage” by Medard Laz. Claim 19 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laz in view of “Let’s Make a Memory” by Gloria Gaither et al.

The Amendment to the Specification

The specification has been amended to include a new abstract. Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner remove the objection to the specification.

The Amendment to the Claims

Applicant has amended claim 11 to better define the invention.

The Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1-7 and 11-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Laz. Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection for the following reason.

As set forth in independent claim 1, the present invention provides for a method of enabling conflict resolution by providing a script to at least one party, wherein the script includes a plurality of phrases, positioning a portable object at a location for the parties to physically position themselves for engaging in a discussion, extending an invitation by a first party to at least one second party for physically positioning themselves at said location in close proximity to the positioned portable object, initiating a discussion corresponding to the script by the first party at said

location relating to the conflict from the perspective of the first party and continuing the discussion according to the script.

As set forth in amended independent claim 11, the present invention provides for a method of enabling conflict resolution process to be conducted between two or more parties who have positioned themselves in proximity to a conflict resolution area, where the parties have been pre-instructed as to a script and a set of instructions to be followed, by one party speaking to another party a set of statements according to the script and the set of instructions, repeating said speaking by each remaining party until all parties present have spoken while remaining in proximity to the conflict resolution area, wherein the conflict resolution area is a specific, predetermined location that has been identified by the parties as a conflict resolution area .

The surprise dinner scenario disclosed in Laz is not a method of conflict resolution, but merely a scenario in which a conflict arises. Laz discloses a scenario in which two individuals, Jamie and Stu, are in conflict over a surprise candlelit dinner prepared by Jamie. The scenario that Laz describes is a conflict, is not a method of conflict resolution and therefore cannot anticipate the features of the claims.

Even if the scenario was applied to the method of claims 1 and 11, the features of the claims are still not anticipated by Laz. Positioning a portable object at a location for the two or more parties, as required by claim 1, is not anticipated by preparing a candlelit dinner at home, as taught by Laz. It is obvious that preparing a candlelit dinner is not equitable in any sense to positioning a portable object, such as a rug. In addition, the specification discloses that an “important aspect of The Peace Rug is that it defines a specific control area called a “conflict resolution area” (CRA) which is identified and associated by individuals at a “conflict resolution location”

(CRL) to which individuals may expect to go to resolve their conflicts with others.”

(Specification Page 6, lines 24-28). The specification of the present invention goes on to state that “the Peace Rug (CRA) may be located in a reserved space (CRL), or it can be stored and unfurled as necessary at the CRL... The Peace Rug should always be placed at a prescribed conflict resolution location.” (Specification Page 8, lines 1-4). An unspecified location of a “candlelit dinner at home” does not teach reserving a space for conflict resolution. Even if the candlelit dinner could be considered a “portable object”, the Examiner states that the “location” is the home, which is contrary to the teachings of the present invention, as a specific reserved space is needed for the portable object.

Similarly, independent claim 11 requires that the conflict resolution area be “a specific, predetermined location that has been identified by the two or more parties as a conflict resolution area.” As discussed in the present Specification at Page 6, lines 1-5, “Object 6 constitutes a conflict resolution area (CRA) remote or set apart from the customary work or gathering area of the participants and operates as a physical focal point or focal area at which the students S engage each other in a conflict resolution discussion.” The dining room in the home is an area reserved for dining – not conflict resolution. It is not an area remote or set apart from the customary gathering area.

Furthermore, Laz does not anticipate the feature of extending an invitation by a first party to at least one second party. On the contrary, the main reason why the dinner became a point of conflict between Jamie and Stu is because Jamie did not communicate her intentions or an invitation to Stu. As Laz discloses on Page 10, lines 7-8, “When communication fails, it is often because something important has not been brought to light.” The “Let’s Eat” invitation as disclosed by Laz is taken out of

context by the Examiner for improper reconstruction. Laz teaches that “Let’s Eat” is an example of another “surface” activity that alludes to the chapter’s title and that the next step of sharing feelings is not taken. Therefore, the “Let’s Eat” invitation is not part of a method for enabling conflict resolution.

Likewise, independent claim 16 requires a portable object, wherein said portable object is adapted to be used as a physical and symbolic focus for convening a conflict resolution discussion. The Examiner states that the surprise candlelight dinner acts as a portable object, and that candlelight is used to adapt the “portable object” as a physical and symbolic focus for convening a conflict resolution discussion. As discussed above in relation to Claim 1, a candlelight dinner is not a portable object. Claim 16 requires a portable object. A candlelight dinner cannot be included in a kit, and therefore cannot anticipate the kit of Claim 16. Laz in no way teaches a physical object adapted to be used as a physical and symbolic focus for convening a conflict resolution discussion. If symbolic of anything, the candlelight dinner in Laz is symbolic of rekindling romance between Jamie and Stu. It is not a symbolic focus for convening a conflict resolution discussion.

Accordingly, Claims 1, 11 and 16 distinguish patentably from Laz and should now be allowed.

Dependent Claims 2-10, 12-15, and 17-18 are of course allowable on at least the same basis as Claims 1, 11 and 16.

The Rejection Under U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 19 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Laz in view of Gaither. Applicant respectfully asserts that the rejection under U.S.C. §103(a) should be withdrawn because neither Laz nor Gaither, whether taken singly or combined, teach or suggest each feature of dependent claim 19.

Claim 19, dependent on claim 16, requires a portable object wherein said portable object is adapted to be used as a physical and symbolic focus for convening a conflict resolution discussion. As discussed above, Applicant submits that Laz fails to teach each feature of independent claim 16, and in particular, does not disclose such a portable object. Moreover, Applicant asserts that the Traveling Friendship Basket disclosed in Gaither fails to teach or suggest a container used to house the portable object and instructions. There is no suggestion in Gaither to use a Traveling Friendship Basket to transport a portable object adapted to be used as a physical and symbolic focus for convening conflict resolution discussion and associated conflict resolution instructions. Rather, it is used to gather small presents to be passed from one family to the next.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of claims 1-19.

It is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance of the application is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner believe that further amendments are necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, or if the Examiner believes that a personal interview would be advantageous in order to more expeditiously resolve any remaining issues, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

To the extent necessary, Applicant petitions for an extension of time under 37 CFR § 1.136. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with this

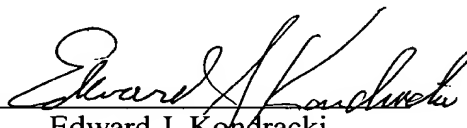
application, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 50-1165

(Attorney Docket No T2739-906589) and credit any excess fees to the same Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.

Date: October 3, 2002

By: 
Edward J. Kondracki
Registration No. 20,604

Miles & Stockbridge P.C.
1751 Pinnacle Drive, Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102-3833
Telephone No: (703) 903-9000
Facsimile No: (703) 610-8686

App. No. 10/124,314: Marked-up Version of the Abstract

System and method for enabling [school age] children[, and others[, in conflict or dispute,] who lack skills necessary to express their desires and emotions[, either at all, or in a courteous, safe manner, to do so] in an effective [way]manner in a conflict or dispute, by providing a conflict resolution location adapted to receive a dedicated portable object, such as a small rug, to be used[, together] with a specialized script and a set of simple procedural rules. The process is directed toward replacing confrontational circumstances with a neutral meeting ground, the “Peace Rug”, to which a degree of respect is accorded, and where specific rules of conduct apply. All concerned join in a face-to-face relationship, preferably sitting on, or in proximity to, the rug [during the entire process] and engage in a scripted conversation during which each participant exercises, and thereby develops, the ability to voice his or her concern and desires with respect to a perceived offense perpetuated by another [child]participant. [The process concludes with the development of a]A mutually agreeable plan[, and promotion of individual pride and responsibility for that accomplishment] is then developed.

App. No. 10/124,314: Marked-up Version of Claims

11. A method for enabling a conflict resolution process to be conducted by two or more parties in mutual conflict who have positioned themselves in proximity to a conflict resolution area, said two or more parties having been pre-instructed as to a script and a set of instructions to be followed in connection with said script, the method comprising:

speaking by one of the two or more parties to another of the two or more parties a set of statements according to the script and the set of instructions; and

repeating said speaking by each remaining party of the two or more parties until all parties present have spoken while remaining in proximity to the conflict resolution area to encourage respectful and safe behavior;

wherein said conflict resolution area is a specific, predetermined location that has been identified by the two or more parties as a conflict resolution area.